UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1872
13 April 1995

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council extends UNOMIL mandate until 30 June; urges Liberian parties to observe cease-fire and promptly install Council of State; establishes Committee to monitor arms embargo against Liberia.

+ Security Council welcomes Secretary-General's decision to prepare for deployment of UNAVEM III infantry units; says Angolan parties must implement Lusaka Protocol and provide Mission with necessary support.

+ Security Council expresses concern at escalation of military activities on Tajik-Afghan border; urges parties to reconfirm commitment to resolve conflict by political means.

+ Security Council seeks acceleration of voter identification process in Western Sahara, with view to holding referendum in January 1996.

+ Special Representative for former Yugoslavia to meet with Bosnian parties next week to negotiate extension of cessation of hostilities Agreement.

+ Fighting intensifies in UNPROFOR and UNCRO mission areas; Bosnian Government forces battle Croatian Serbs in Sector North.

+ Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks concludes after revising draft agreement on conservation and sustainable use of high seas fisheries.

+ Preparatory Committee for Habitat II to hold second session in Nairobi from 24 April to 5 May.

+ Department of Humanitarian Affairs sends emergency aid to Cape Verde following eruption of Fogo volcano.

* * *

The Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 30 June. It urged all the Liberian parties to reestablish an effective cease-fire, to promptly install

the Council of State, and to take effective steps to implement other provisions of the Akosombo and Accra Agreements. The Council took that action by unanimously adopting resolution 985 (1995).

The Council urged all States to comply fully with the embargo on deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Liberia imposed by resolution 788 (1992). To that end, it decided to establish a Council Committee to seek information from all States on action taken by them concerning the effective implementation of the embargo; to consider any information concerning violations of the embargo and to make recommendations on ways to increase its effectiveness; and to recommend appropriate measures in response to violations.

The Council asked the Secretary-General to report by 15 June on the situation in Liberia, including whether there was an effective cease-fire and whether UNOMIL could carry out its mandate. The Council said it would consider the Mission's future in the light of that report.

* * *

In another meeting today, the Council welcomed the confirmation by the Secretary-General that the cease-fire was generally holding in Angola and that the level of violations had remained relatively low. In a statement by its President, Karel Kovanda (Czech Republic), the Council welcomed the continued deployment of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) observers and the progress in related areas. It also welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to proceed with preparations for the deployment of UNAVEM III infantry units. The Council emphasized the need for full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. The Angolan parties must provide the Mission with indispensable logistic support, and undertake essential tasks to permit the deployment of the infantry units in May.

The Council expressed concern about some developments in Angola. Those included reports of continuing military actions and preparations, particularly the Angolan Air Force's attack on Andulo airstrip; the failure to complete the second phase of disengagement by 10 April; and recent attacks on personnel of UNAVEM III and non-governmental organizations. It called for unrestricted access for the Mission in areas controlled by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

The Council called on the parties to cooperate fully with the United Nations, particularly through the Joint Commission, and to assure the safety of UNAVEM III and NGO personnel. It reiterated its call for a meeting between Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos and UNITA President Jonas Savimbi as a matter of urgency.

* * *

The Security Council has expressed deep concern at the escalation of military activities on the Tajik-Afghan border and the resultant loss of

(more)

life. In a statement last night by its President, the Council urged the Government and the opposition in Tajikistan to reconfirm, through concrete steps, their commitment to resolve the conflict only through political means.

The Council said armed activities by the Tajik opposition in violation of the 17 September cease-fire Agreement jeopardized inter-Tajik dialogue and the process of national reconciliation. It called on the Tajik Government and the opposition to comply strictly with the Agreement, and particularly called on the opposition to extend it for a substantial period beyond 26 April. The Council welcomed the agreement by the parties to hold an urgent high-level meeting in Moscow.

* * *

In a second Presidential statement last night, the Council welcomed the progress achieved so far in the identification and registration process in Western Sahara. It emphasized the need to continue accelerating the rate of identification, and endorsed the goal of identifying 25,000 voters a month. The Council expressed concern about delays resulting from the failure to ensure the continuous presence at identification centres of representatives of the "sub-fractions" (tribal groups). It expressed the hope that the agreement reached on a method for choosing alternative representatives would help to further accelerate the identification process, with a view to holding the referendum in January 1996.

The Council called on both parties to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to ensure prompt and full implementation of the Settlement Plan. It regretted that there has been insufficient progress in the identification process to enable the Secretary-General to recommend 1 June as the commencement date of the transitional period. It also expressed concern about the slow progress on other aspects relevant to the Plan which must be implemented before the referendum could take place. The Council said it hoped to see rapid progress by the time of the Secretary-General's report in May, which would enable it to favourably consider extending MINURSO's mandate.

* * *

It will not be easy to secure an extension of the cessation of hostilities Agreement signed by the Bosnian parties last December, according to the Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi. The Agreement expires at the end of this month. Mr. Akashi told correspondents at Headquarters today that each party was unhappy with the way the agreement had been honoured -- or dishonoured -- by the other. He said that the Security Council was gravely concerned about the matter, and that he would be traveling to Sarajevo and Pale next week to try to negotiate an extension of the Agreement.

Mr. Akashi described the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina as quite serious, with fighting continuing in the north and east of the country. He said he was "anxious and impatient" for progress in the former Yugoslavia, and

(more)

expressed the hope that real advances could be made by the end of the year. He was not disheartened by the experience of the United Nations in the region to date. Three years was not a long time in the history of humanity, or the Organization, and it had taken years for peace to be achieved in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

The peace-keeping operations in the former Yugoslavia were the largest and most complex ever undertaken by the United Nations, Mr. Akashi said. The problems faced daily, and sometimes hourly, were tremendous. However, the Organization had brave and dedicated soldiers and civilians, and their teamwork was always solid. He went on to say that some of the disappointments in the region might have been a function of unjustified expectations. The parties to a conflict sometimes expected too much from peace-keepers. However, the United Nations must remain a credible, impartial third party.

* * *

Fighting has broadened and worsened in the mission areas of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO), a spokesman for the Organization said today. Clashes continued in north-east and central Bosnia, while five civilians were injured by a mortar round in Sarajevo.

Meanwhile in Croatia, 12 shells landed around Dubrovnik airport, causing a fire at a petrol station. In Sector North, Ukrainian peace-keepers had to abandon an observation post amid heavy fighting between the Bosnian Government's Fifth Corps and Croatian Serb forces near the border with the Bihac pocket.

* * *

The United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks yesterday concluded its fifth session, after revising a draft agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of high seas fisheries. The agreement could lead to a legally binding treaty which would enter into force 30 days after its ratification by 40 countries.

The revised 48-article draft agreement was presented by Conference Chairman Satya Nandan (Fiji) based on negotiations which began in July 1993. It contains general principles to guide coastal and management duties under the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. The duties include measures to eliminate over-fishing and ensure long-term sustainability of fish stocks.

* * *

The second session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II will be held from 24 April to 5 May in Nairobi, Kenya. The Committee will be deliberating on a draft global plan of action to guide the development of human settlements -- cities, towns and villages -- for the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The Conference will be held in Istanbul in 1996.

(more)

If present trends continue, half of the world's population -- or nearly 3 billion people -- will be living in urban centres by the turn of the century. Meanwhile, most of the growth in the world's urban population will occur in developing countries.

* * *

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) is sending two aircraft to Cape Verde with emergency relief material for people displaced by the eruption of Fogo volcano. Some 5,000 people, most of them women, children and the elderly, have been evacuated to coastal villages where they are facing difficult conditions.

The Government of Cape Verde has launched an international appeal for assistance as continuing volcanic activity could cause the situation to worsen.

* *** *